

Firefly

by [Julie L. Moore](#) in the [July 3, 2019](#) issue

"It is only in light that the colour of a thing is seen. Hence our first task is to explain what light is."

—Aristotle, *De Anima (On the Soul)*, translated by J. A. Smith

When my dog entered the house,
a lone, lost firefly came, too,
wings flapping so fast, I thought, at first,

a wasp was wandering in.
After the bug's red head revealed
its true identity, I looked around

but found it nowhere. I wondered whether,
like King Hamlet's ghost,
it bid adieu, paling

in comparison to the dawn air
and intentional witness.
Now, I await the bioluminescence

twilight might expose.
Seated on my couch,
dog by my side, I want atoms

to animate the room as luciferin,
the molecule whose root reaches
down to Latin, *lucifer*, light-bringer,

combines with luciferase,
its catalyst cousin, to yield their cold
fluorescence, illuminating a primal paradox

even the fallen angels understand.